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SUBJECT: ISRAEL MEDIA REACTION

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SUBJECTS COVERED IN THIS REPORT:  
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- [1](#)1. Iran
- [1](#)2. Mideast

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Key stories in the media:  
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All major media led with news that several assassins of senior Hamas operative Mahmoud al-Mabhouh used the identities of British-born Israelis for the Dubai hit. HaQaretz reported that British

Government sources told the Daily Telegraph yesterday that the Irish passport-holders were most likely Mossad agents carrying false documentation. Media reported that the U.K. authorities are investigating the illegal use of British passports in the Dubai operation. Leading media reported that Syria has arrested a senior Hamas official on suspicion of having assisted in the murder.

Major media quoted PM Benjamin Netanyahu as saying yesterday during talks with his Russian counterpart, Vladimir Putin, that Israel has no intention of initiating a war against any regional player in the Middle East. Netanyahu was responding to Iranian President Mahmoud Ahmadinejad's recent prediction that Israel would launch military strikes against Iran either in the spring or summer of this year. During his two-hour meeting with Netanyahu, Putin stressed that Russia would refrain from selling any arms to Syria and Iran that would tilt the strategic balance in the region. "Israel is not planning any sort of war," Netanyahu said at a joint news conference with Putin. "It was the Iranians who began talks with Syria on this issue and they are using all sorts of manipulations." "It would not surprise me if Iran's behavior is a direct result of the growing international debate at the UN Security Council on sanctions against Iran," the PM added. Israel Radio quoted a senior Russian official as saying that the sale of S-300 anti-aircraft missiles to Iran is being held up for technical reasons.

Citing the AP, The Jerusalem Post reported that Secretary of State Hillary Clinton told Saudi students yesterday that Iran could trigger a nuclear arms race throughout the Middle East.

HaQaretz and Israel Radio quoted Hizbullah leader Sheikh Hassan Nasrallah as saying that his group will hit vital Israeli targets, such as Ben-Gurion Airport, if Israel bombs Beirut. He reiterated his intention to avenge the death of senior Hizbullah operative Imad Mughniyah.

HaQaretz reported that yesterday the High Court of Justice ruled that the state must demolish settler outposts within 60 days.

HaQaretz and other media reported that, during a meeting of the Conference of Presidents of Major American Jewish Organizations, Deputy FM Daniel Ayalon likened Israeli Arab Knesset members to U.S. congressmen who would advise the Taliban. Ayalon was referring to those parliamentarians' contacts with the PA. Ayalon also attacked the American lobby group, J Street. The Jerusalem Post quoted Alan Solow, the chairman of the Conference, who the daily says is a key Obama backer, as saying that the administration has learned some lessons from the mistakes of the past year. In other news, Yediot reported that Ayalon has decided to boycott meetings with U.S. Congress members because their visits to Israel were sponsored by organizations that criticize the country -- J Street and the Churches for Middle East Peace. Maariv said that it was the Foreign Ministry that instructed President Shimon Peres and Ayalon to boycott Congress members.

The Jerusalem Post and other media reported that yesterday members of the Knesset's Foreign Affairs and Defense Committee visited the controversial Beit Yehoshua building in East Jerusalem. Right-wing parliamentarians called the demolition order discriminatory.

The Jerusalem Post quoted rightist Likud Knesset Member Tzipi Hotovely as saying yesterday that West Bank Palestinians should be granted Israeli citizenship.

The Jerusalem Post reported that yesterday the Simon Wiesenthal Center accused opponents of its plans to build a museum near a historic Muslim cemetery in central West Jerusalem of sheer hypocrisy after the center obtained information showing that the Supreme Muslim Council of British Mandate Palestine had planned to build a large commercial center on top of the cemetery in 1945.

Maariv reported that the Dawn Media Group, a British company, ranked Israel in 17th place among countries at risk of terror attacks. Iraq, Afghanistan, Pakistan, and Somalia top the list.

Yediot and The Jerusalem Post reported that the Information and Diaspora Ministry has produced a booklet to turn Israeli tourists abroad into goodwill ambassadors for their country -- among other facts, Israeli travelers are urged to tell foreigners that Israelis

want peace, that Palestine has not always been an Arab country, and that U.N. Security Council Resolution 242 does not state that Israel must return to the 1967 borders. A poll commissioned by the ministry found that 85% of Israelis are willing to represent the state abroad.

Israel Radio reported that Israel and Russia agreed on the construction of two memorials -- one in Israel for the Russian soldiers in World War II and the second in Moscow devoted to the Holocaust. The media reported that Israel's desire to retrieve the historic Guenzburg collection of ancient Jewish manuscripts from Russia was discussed during Netanyahu's meeting on Monday with Russian President Dmitry Medvedev. Israeli officials said afterward that due to the improved relations between Jerusalem and Moscow, Russian officials will "positively consider" Israel's request. Netanyahu personally raised the subject of the collection, which is thought to be the world's second-largest anthology of ancient Hebrew literature, after the Bodleian Library in Oxford.

Citing the AP, HaQaretz and The Jerusalem Post reported that the Vatican plans to post some of its World War II archives online to calm the controversy over Pope Pius XII's actions during the Holocaust. The Vatican's newspaper announced the plan, saying it will render service to the historic truth and officials said yesterday the material will be accessible soon. However, a panel of Jewish and Catholic scholars who examined the 11 volumes of material a decade ago concluded that more information was required to decide whether Pius did everything he could to head off the Nazis' efforts to exterminate European Jews.

Over the past few days the media has mentioned allegations that noted Zionist-Religious Rabbi Mordechai (Moti) Elon made sexual advances to yeshiva students over several years. Elon, who denies the charges, is the brother of Benjamin (Benny) Elon, a former right-wing politician. Their father, Menachem Elon, was the former Deputy Chief Justice of Israel. HaQaretz dubbed the family the QKennedys of the religious Zionist camp.Q Many voices in that camp, including the daily Makor Rishon-Hatzofe, support Mordechai Elon. Some media speculated on a possible rift of the camp.

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1. Iran:  
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Block Quotes:  
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1. QPartners against Iran

The conservative, independent Jerusalem Post editorialized (2/17): QIsrael has been publicly supportive of the American effort at engagement with Iran, even as it has privately complained about the lack of firm parameters guiding that engagement, the fudging of deadlines, the apparent capacity for Iran to exploit a well-meaning presidentQs desire for a diplomatic solution in order to buy time and close in on the nuclear weapons goal. Ultimately, Israel must and will take the decisions it feels necessary to safeguard its basic security interests. Ultimately, Israel will gauge the risks, assess the consequences, and act accordingly. Today, in mid-February 2010, the U.S. and Israel remain shoulder-to-shoulder in seeking biting sanctions against Teheran, to obviate the recourse to the use of force. It is encouraging to see the succession of candid, straight-talking, high-level visits bolstering that coordination. It is a partnership that needs to be maintained at the very highest level as well.

II. QWhat a Spectacle

Anne Bayefsky, the Director of the Touro Institute on Human Rights and the Holocaust, and a Senior Fellow at Hudson Institute, wrote in The Jerusalem Post (2/17): QAssistant Secretary of State for Democracy, Human Rights, and Labor Michael Posner gave a speech [at the U.N. Human Rights Council] on Monday critical of various Iranian abominations -- for a grand total of two minutes.... Iran is not the slightest bit concerned that the council will translate PosnerQs two minutes into anything that bites. The council has never adopted a resolution worried about human rights in Iran; itQs too busy condemning Israel more often than all the other 191 U.N. states

combined. Back in 2002, the former commission eliminated the position of U.N. human rights investigator on Iran, and the chance of it reappearing as a consequence of these proceedings are zero. So when the Obama administration touts its 120-second speech as evidence of its effort to get serious about Iran, or as an excuse for having joined the U.N.'s viciously anti-Israel Human Rights Council, be warned.

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12. Mideast:  
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Block Quotes:  
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1I. QTime for a Change in U.S. Mideast Strategy

Kenneth J. Bialkin, a former chair of the Conference of Presidents of Major American Jewish Organizations, wrote in the conservative, independent Jerusalem Post (2/17): QThe Obama administration is widely perceived as favoring the Palestinian side in seeking unilateral concessions from Israel. In taking this position, the administration is not deviating from the policy orientations established by the U.S. State Department since 1948.... A peace process that rests on Israel's unilateral concessions is doomed to fail unless and until the world also demands that the Arab world recognizes that the Arab-Israel conflict can be resolved only if and when Israel's legitimacy and sovereignty is openly recognized and accepted.... The most important reason for change in strategy is that history and the march of time make it the right thing to do. For too long, Israel's right to be recognized and accepted by the Arab world has been ignored by the international community. The U.N. should be ashamed that each year it countenances General Assembly resolutions advocating the expulsion of a member state and similar outrages by states whose societies deny their own citizens fundamental human rights. The U.S. should lead the U.N. and the international community to correct the long-term injustice and lack of respect for the legitimacy of the state of Israel and the historical contributions of the Jewish people.

II. QWhy the Mossad Chief Must Go

Defense commentator Amir Oren wrote on page one of the independent, left-leaning Ha'aretz (2/17): QThe State of Israel did not claim responsibility for the assassination of Mahmoud al-Mabhouh in Dubai. The entire matter is treated as AFMR Q Qaccording to foreign media reportsQ.... The anticipated diplomatic crisis is not, so far, with Dubai, but with the countries whose passports were used by the assassins. The United Kingdom and Ireland were used once again, and this time, a French connection topped it off. It is as if Israeli governments had never apologized to London for using British documentation; as if they had not promised solemnly, when passports of Her Majesty's subjects were found in a certain phone booth, that this would never happen again.... Netanyahu played deaf to warnings by [former Mossad head Ephraim Halevy and others] and extended [Mossad chief Meir] Dagan's tenure for an eighth year, a decision as hasty as it was unnecessary. But the Mossad ... cannot hinge upon one man, without whom everything would collapse. What is needed now is a swift decision to terminate Dagan's contract and appoint a new Mossad chief.

III. QA Trinational State

Diplomatic correspondent Aluf Benn wrote in HaQaretz (2/17): QIsrael is in the midst of an unprecedented social change that, unlike in the past, stems from internal developments rather than from a wave of immigration. A different, multicultural society is developing here -- a trinational state of secular Jews, ultra-Orthodox, and Arabs, with a small minority of religious Zionists.... Today, developing a broad national ethos that would include Arabs and ultra-Orthodox seems like mission impossible. It is obvious that a rightist government headed by Netanyahu and Avigdor Lieberman is not built for this. Therefore, we must concentrate on change from the bottom up. Everyone must ask himself or herself how he or she can contribute to integration: buying in shops that employ Arabs and ultra-Orthodox, hiring workers from these communities, renting apartments to them, or simply watching television programs and channels that represent our multicultural mosaic -- and get to know

an Arab or an ultra-Orthodox instead of fearing them. If we open our doors to them and give them opportunities, we will all benefit. And if we continue to shut ourselves off, we will all crash.

#### IV. QIn Favor of the Right of Return

Karni Eldad, settler daughter of right-wing Knesset Member Arie Eldad, wrote in HaQaretz (2/17): QIn 1948, scores of families were expelled from their homes in Jerusalem. The city was divided and squatters took over their houses and built on their properties. These refugees prayed to return to the homes they purchased legally in the 1920s and 1930s.... In 2009, the High Court of Justice had its say: the squatters must be evicted and they must also pay compensation to the owners of the land for all the years they made use of it.... Jewish? What? Yes, yes. These are families that are now purchasing, for the full price, their own properties in the Shimon Hatzadik neighborhood, better known as Sheikh Jarrah. Is anyone on the left standing by the side of these robbed families and against the Arab squatters? Not a single one of them.

#### IV. QGoldstoneQs Mandate

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Dr. Muhammad Watad, a senior law lecturer at the Safed Academic College, wrote in the popular, pluralist Maariv (2/17): + Is a Jew expected to rule in favor of Jews just because they are Jews?.... [Judge Richard] Goldstone received a mandate to investigate. He came to the region to probe possible violations of laws of war and human rights during Operation Cast Lead. Treating the Goldstone Report as Qlegal terrorQ a characterization used by people who are reportedly enlightened an s experts in international law Q is nothing but an insult to intelligence. I am a proud Israeli; I am a proud jurist; but I am not childish -- I am a professional. As a citizen of the state, as a son of this state, I am concerned about its future. Israel is a state of law; it is a democratic state; and it is a constitutional state. An enlightened state investigates itself. Israel monitors itself a lot; it therefore deserves every praise. Regarding Goldstone, Israel behaved childishly; it erred in doing so.

CUNNINGHAM